

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BONN 00736 01 OF 02 131908Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----009193 131912Z /45

P R 131852Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4784
INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
USMISSION USBERLIN
AMCONSUL STUTTGART

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 00736

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1.
TAGS: PEPR TSPA UR GW CG US UK FR BQG
SUBJECT: RENEWED SOVIET DEMARCHE ON OTRAG

REFS: (A) BONN 633; (B) STATE 8302

BEGIN SUMMARY. IN BRIEFING THE AMBASSADOR ON HIS
MEETING WITH SOVIET AMBASSADOR FALIN, VAN WELL STRESSED
THAT FALIN'S PRESENTATION OF THE OTRAG DEMARCHE WAS NOT
VERY TOUGH. HE LEFT NO PAPER, AND HIS TONE WAS LESS
AGGRESSIVE THAN THAT USED BY THE SOVIET CHARGE IN
WASHINGTON. VAN WELL REITERATED THE ASSURANCES HE HAD
GIVEN FALIN ON SEPTEMBER 30 AND ADDED THAT THE FRG
HAD NO LEGAL OBLIGATION TO DISCUSS OTRAG WITH THE
SOVIETS BUT WAS DOING SO IN ORDER TO PREVENT
MISUNDERSTANDING. FALIN DID NOT TAKE ISSUE WITH VAN
WELL'S STATEMENT THAT THE FRG DID NOT FEEL THAT ANY
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SOVIET RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS WERE INVOLVED, AND THUS
DID NOT CLARIFY WHAT INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS THE
SOVIETS WERE INVOKING.

THE FRG DOES NOT INTEND TO MAKE ANY FURTHER REPLY TO
THE SOVIETS. WE WILL CONSULT NEXT WEEK WITH THE
BRITISH AND FRENCH EMBASSIES ON ANY NECESSARY CHANGES

TO THE PROPOSED ALLIED REPLY TO THE SOVIETS.
END SUMMARY.

1. VAN WELL'S BRIEFING TO THE AMBASSADOR ON HIS MEETING WITH FALIN THE AFTERNOON OF JANUARY 12 WAS SUPPLEMENTED BY A MORE DETAILED ACCOUNT OF THE CONVERSATION IN THE BONN GROUP. THE FOLLOWING IS AN ACCOUNT OF THE MEETING AS GIVEN TO ALLIED REPS BY THE FRG BONN GROUP REP ON JANUARY 13:

2. FALIN BEGAN BY STATING THAT HE WAS INSTRUCTED TO REFER TO THE SOVIET DEMARCHE OF AUGUST 1977 IN WHICH MOSCOW HAD QUERIED THE FRG REGARDING THE CONSTRUCTION OF A ROCKET TEST SITE BY OTRAG. THE SOVIETS HAD NOT YET RECEIVED AN OFFICIAL RESPONSE TO THIS DEMARCHE. ACCORDING TO INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO THE SOVIETS, WORK WAS PROCEEDING AT THE SITE AND NEW TYPES OF MILITARY ROCKETS WERE BEING TESTED. DENIALS THAT THIS ACTIVITY WAS UNDERWAY WERE HARDLY CONVINCING. THEREFORE, ON THE BASIS OF THE "RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS (PFLICHTEN) FROM THE WELL-KNOWN WARTIME AND POST-WAR INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS" THE SOVIET SIDE WISHED ONCE AGAIN TO INQUIRE ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF THE ROCKET SITE, AND THE CHARACTER OF THE WORK GOING ON THERE. IN ADDITION, THE SOVIET SIDE REQUESTED TO BE ADVISED TO WHAT EXTENT FRG AUTHORITIES WERE EXERCISING CONTROL OVER THE
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SITUATION. IN DECIDING HOW TO PROCEED WITH THIS MATTER, IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR THE SOVIET SIDE TO BE AWARE OF ALL ASPECTS OF THE SITUATION, INCLUDING THE POSITION OF THE FRG.

3. IN RESPONSE, VAN WELL REFERRED TO HIS CONVERSATION OF SEPTEMBER 30 WITH FALIN IN WHICH HE HAD POINTED OUT THAT OTRAG WAS A PRIVATE FIRM. THE FRG HAD NO INDICATION THAT THE FIRM WAS ENGAGED IN ACTIVITY WITH A MILITARY PURPOSE. THE FIRM HAD EXPLAINED THAT IT WAS PRODUCING AN INEXPENSIVE ROCKET FOR METEOROLOGICAL AND RESEARCH PURPOSES. OTRAG WAS IN NO WAY BEING FINANCED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. AN OFFICIAL OF THE FRG HAD, MOREOVER, MADE A PRIVATE VISIT TO THE OTRAG SITE AND HAD DETERMINED THAT IT WAS A PRIMITIVE FACILITY. IN VIEW OF THIS SITUATION, CONTRADICTORY REPORTS, ESPECIALLY THOSE IN THE SOVIET PRESS, WERE COMPLETELY ABSURD.

4. VAN WELL POINTED OUT TO FALIN THAT THE FRG WAS AT THE MOMENT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING ADDING ROCKETS FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES AND COMPONENTS TO THE LIST OF GOODS

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----009212 131919Z /45

P R 131852Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4785
INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
USMISSION USBERLIN
AMCONSUL STUTTGART

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WHICH COULD NOT BE EXPORTED WITHOUT OFFICIAL APPROVAL
UNDER THE FOREIGN ECONOMIC LAW. VAN WELL ASKED FALIN
TO HANDLE THIS INFORMATION CONFIDENTIALLY.

5. VAN WELL INFORMED FALIN THAT HE WAS TELLING HIM THIS
TO PREVENT ANY MISUNDERSTANDING; THE FRG WAS NOT
OBLIGATED TO DISCUSS THIS MATTER WITH THE SOVIET SIDE.
THE FRG HAD DETERMINED, ON THE BASIS OF A THOROUGH
EXAMINATION OF THE MATTER, THAT THE OTRAG MATTER IN
NO WAY AFFECTED ANY OBLIGATIONS UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW.
MOREOVER, THE FRG WAS DISAPPOINTED THAT THE SOVIET PRESS
CONTINUED TO PUBLISH WILD CLAIMS ON THIS MATTER. OTHER
PRESS REPORTS AS WELL, SUCH AS THE ARTICLE BY TAD SZULC,
WERE FANTASIES AND COMPLETELY WITHOUT FOUNDATION.
ZAIRE, WHICH WAS NATURALLY INTERESTED IN TECHNOLOGY
TRANSFER, HAD CONCLUDED THE AGREEMENT WITH OTRAG IN
THE EXERCISE OF ITS RIGHT AS A SOVEREIGN STATE.

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6. FALIN REPLIED THAT IT WAS NOT EASY FOR THE SOVIET SIDE TO EXAMINE THE ACCURACY OF PRESS REPORTS. IN ADDITION, THE SOVIET SIDE HAD DONE NOTHING MORE THAN REPEAT WESTERN PRESS REPORTS ABOUT OTRAG. FALIN SAID HE WOULD TRANSMIT VAN WELL'S REMARKS TO MOSCOW, BUT HE COULD NOT SAY TO WHAT EXTENT THEY WOULD BE RECEIVED WITH SATISFACTION. HE PERSONALLY BELIEVED THAT FURTHER CLEARING UP THE MATTER WOULD BE A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. HE THOUGHT IT BEST THAT THE PROBLEM TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE CEASE TO BE A TOPIC OF DISCUSSION; THERE WERE MORE CONSTRUCTIVE TASKS TO BE DEALT WITH.

7. VAN WELL POINTED OUT THAT THE FRG COULD NOT PERMIT THE IMPRESSION TO COME ABOUT THAT IT WAS BEING DISCRIMINATED AGAINST IN THE FIELD OF PEACEFUL RESEARCH. THE FRG STOOD IN THE FRONT ROW OF TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS AND ITS ECONOMY LIVED FROM EXPORTS. THERE COULD, THEREFORE, BE NO QUESTION OF RESTRICTIONS IN THE PEACEFUL AREA. THIS ALSO HELD TRUE FOR SPACE EXPLORATION.

8. FALIN EXPRESSED UNDERSTANDING FOR THIS POSITION BUT NOTED THAT THERE WAS ALSO A GRAY ZONE WHERE THE BORDERS BETWEEN TECHNOLOGICAL AND MILITARY APPLICATION WERE NOT CLEAR. IT WAS NECESSARY TO DO AWAY WITH MISUNDERSTANDINGS IN THIS AREA. HE WOULD REPORT THIS CONVERSATION TO MOSCOW AND HOPED THAT SOME QUESTIONS COULD NOW BE CLARIFIED.

9. COMMENT: VAN WELL STRESSED TO THE AMBASSADOR THAT FALIN'S PRESENTATION WAS NOT VERY TOUGH AND THAT HE WAS MUCH LESS AGGRESSIVE THAN VASEV APPEARED TO HAVE BEEN
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IN HIS PRESENTATION IN WASHINGTON. FALIN GAVE THE CLEAR IMPRESSION THAT HE DID NOT ATTACH TOO MUCH IMPORTANCE TO THE OTRAG ISSUE AND THAT HE HOPED IT HAD NOW BEEN DISPOSED OF. AT THE MOMENT THE FOREIGN OFFICE DOES NOT INTEND TO MAKE ANY FURTHER REPLY.

10. THE UK AND FRENCH EMBASSIES DO NOT YET HAVE REPORTS OF THE SOVIET PRESENTATIONS IN LONDON AND PARIS (THE APPOINTMENT IN LONDON WAS NOT TO BE GRANTED UNTIL EARLY NEXT WEEK). WE HOPE TO MEET BY THE END OF THE WEEK TO DISCUSS ANY NECESSARY MODIFICATIONS TO THE RECOMMENDED ALLIED REPLY.

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